



HJ0068

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1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, During Operation Iraqi Freedom, Pentagon
3 officials discovered a trove of thousands of centuries-old
4 artifacts from Iraq's Jewish community in the basement of
5 Saddam Hussein's intelligence service headquarters; and

6 WHEREAS, These artifacts were improperly seized by force
7 from their rightful owners by the regime of Saddam Hussein,
8 which then stored them in a flooded basement, most likely in an
9 effort to marginalize the culture and history of Mesopotamian
10 Jews; and

11 WHEREAS, The artifacts were brought to the United States in
12 2003, where they were carefully cleaned, preserved,
13 photographed, and displayed at the National Archives; and

14 WHEREAS, The United States Department of State has
15 announced its plans to return the collection to the government
16 of Iraq in the summer of 2014, claiming the Iraqi people are
17 the rightful owners; and

18 WHEREAS, More than 40 American Jewish groups have expressed
19 their deep misgivings about returning the artifacts to Iraq,
20 citing "uncertain conditions" in Iraq and calling for the
21 artifacts to be given to the synagogues of Iraqi Jews around

1 the world; and

2 WHEREAS, The Pentagon official who discovered the
3 collection, Harold Rhode, has likened the prospective return of
4 the artifacts to "giving the personal effects of Jews killed in
5 the Holocaust back to Germany"; and

6 WHEREAS, Religious documents and artifacts such as these
7 are sacred and should properly be returned to the Jewish
8 community from which they were stolen, rather than used to
9 obscure Iraq's history of hostility to the Jewish people;
10 therefore, be it

11 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
12 NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
13 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we urge the United States
14 Department of State to rescind its poorly reasoned and
15 inappropriate decision to transfer these artifacts back to the
16 Iraqi government; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That we urge the United States Department of
18 State to return the artifacts to their rightful owners in the
19 Jewish community; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
21 delivered to the President of the United States, the Secretary

1 of State of the United States, and the members of the Illinois
2 congressional delegation.